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ABSTRACT

The problems faced by the printer-editors in Wisconsin Territory were financial want, dependence on slow and unreliable transportation and mail systems, and a lack of reliable journeyman compositors and printers. Sources of income regularly included backers who were community promoters of politicians and who frequently withdrew their support with little notice. Other sources of income were equally unreliable and included advertising (very cheap and infrequent), subscriptions (often not paid for), public printing (not very profitable), and job printing (rare). Getting supplies was difficult, and the mails could not be counted on for delivery of news from the East or for delivery of papers to subscribers. Equipment was seldom adequate and was often second or third hand. Journeyman printers and compositors of the time were difficult to find and moved often. Nevertheless, the newspaper business flourished and by 1850 the combined circulation of Wisconsin Territory newspapers was more than two million. (TJ)

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"Out of Sorts and Out of Cash": Problems of Newspaper Publishing in Wisconsin Territory, 1833-1848

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"Out of Sorts and Out of Cash": Problems of
Newspaper Publishing in Wisconsin Territory, 1833-1848

The story of the establishment of newspapers in the westward-expanding United States of the mid-19th century is frequently told in terms that verge on the poetic. Journalism of the period is described by Frank Luther Mott, for example, as "spreading westward in a mighty wave. . . . Wherever a town sprang up, there a printer with a rude press and 'a shirt-tail-full of type' was sure to appear. . . ."[1] William H. Taft, expanding on the same theme, tells us: "This scene was repeated in hundreds of communities. Each printer and his apprentice was recording history in the making. . . ."[2] Daniel Boorstin, discussing what he calls the "booster" press of the time, contends that "Like the musket,the newspaper became a weapon and a tool, to conquer the forest and to build new communities."[3] They and others, to greater or lesser degree, further detail the numbers of newspapers that appeared on the frontier, the prime reasons for their establishment, and their contributions to journalism generally and to the development of their individual communities. There is little mention in their discussions, however, of the difficulties under which frontier newspapers were established and maintained. But it would seem to

be the printer-editor's ability to overcome those difficulties which makes the story of the expansion of American journalism all the more remarkable.

That that is so is pointed up in more specialized accounts, most notably those of William H. Lyon and George S. Hage. Indeed, the problems faced by Missouri editors in the years prior to 1860 as detailed by Lyon and those of the Minnesota editors Hage studied are quite similar: financial want, dependence upon slow and unreliable transportation and mail systems, and a lack of journeyman printers.[4] But how universal were those conditions? And what effects did they have on the operation of newspapers? It is the purpose of this paper to provide further material to aid in answering those questions by examining the common problems faced by printer-editors in still another portion of the American frontier of the 19th century, Wisconsin Territory.

The getting of money was the printer-editor's major concern, and a constant one, beginning with his need to find financial support to begin his venture. The average capitalization of the six newspapers being published in Wisconsin in the first six months of 1840, the first year for which such figures are available, was $1,717.[5] Two years earlier, Josiah A. Noonan had bought out the press, type, and other materials of the Racine Argus for $1,500 outright in order to establish his Wisconsin Enquirer at Madison.[6] When he bought the office and equipment of the Milwaukee Advertiser in 1841, he paid another $1,500, cash on the barrel.[7] In 1842, Harrison Reed bought the Enquirer from Noonan's successor, Charles C. Sholes, for $2,000, agreeing to pay $400 down, $400 a month later, and the remainder within one year.[8] At a time when the standard wage for journeymen in major eastern cities ranged from $9 to $12 a week,[9] the expense of buying an established newspaper or setting up a new one altogether was prohibitively high for most printers emigrating west. As a result, they turned for aid to -- or, on occasion, were sought out by --

the financial speculators of the frontier, the "proprietors and projectors of towns and enterprises, and the ambitious men of the day," the "boosters," to use Boorstin's term, who subsidized newspapers in order to promote their towns and businesses.[10]

Albert G. Ellis of Green Bay, for example, was approached by Dr. Addison Philleo, a Mineral Point physician and promoter, as early as 1826, ten years before Wisconsin was separated from Michigan Territory, with the proposition that they establish a newspaper. Ellis was an Episcopal lay leader and teacher with the Oneida Indians in the Green Bay area, but he had received his early training as a printer and he was interested in the proposal. Philleo, however, did not keep an appointment to discuss the matter.[11] Two years later, Dr. Philleo and the Brown County promoter-politician Morgan L. Martin managed to raise $1,200 to begin a newspaper that would "advocate the improvement of the Fox and Wisconsin rivers," but they decided the amount was not sufficient and gave up their plans.[12]

In 1831, Ellis won a promise of backing from Col. J. C. Stambaugh, the U. S. Indian agent in Wisconsin. Ellis went so far as to order a press, type, and paper, and to issue a prospectus for a newspaper to be known as the Green Bay Intelligencer. That project fell through, however, when Col. Stambaugh did not live up to his promise, and Ellis headed off into the wilderness as a surveyor in an effort to raise the necessary money on his own. He was finally able to work out a partnership with John V. Suydam, another surveyor, but only after Suydam had actually procured a press and other equipment from Detroit.[13] On December 11, 1833, the Green Bay Intelligencer finally appeared, the first newspaper in what was to become Wisconsin and an organ which, Ellis unabashedly admitted in the first issue, had "one principal object in view, viz., the advancement of the country west of Lake Michigan."

In 1836, a group of businessmen headed by the developer of the west side of the town of Milwaukee, Byron Kilbourn, established Daniel H. Richards as editor of the Milwaukee Advertiser, the first newspaper in that community. Their aim was to

promote settlement and development of the land on the west bank of the Milwaukee River and to press for the development of the Milwaukee and Rock River Canal, a project in which Kilbourn was deeply involved as investor and promoter.[14] A year later, a group headed by Solomon Juneau, the acknowledged founder of Milwaukee, backed publication of the Milwaukee Sentinel, a newspaper devoted to the development of the community on the east side of the river.[15] At Racine, six lawyers and merchants banded together in 1838 to establish the Racine Argus.[16] The following year, William W. Wyman won support of Ebenezer Brigham, the contractor who erected Madison's first public buildings, in establishing his Madison Express.[17]

And so it was elsewhere; wherever new towns "sprang into existence, newspapers were established to give a name to and make known the peculiar advantages of their locality."[18] The boosters lent the printer the money that was necessary to begin his newspaper, provided copy in which they gave voice to their dreams of the future, and saw to it that the newspapers were circulated free in the East to bring their communities "to the favorable attention of immigrants and the eastern world generally," to persuade others to help them bring their dreams to reality.[19] And always with an eye toward building their own fortunes as their communities grew. But as soon as the boosters lost their visions or their money or simply left to find new challenges in the land farther west, the newspapers they had supported failed, and the printers had to seek new sources of support.

Some printer-editors aligned themselves with political parties or individual political leaders, which put them on even shakier ground -- in part, because the parties were factionalized and, in part, because of the treacherous nature of frontier politics. Harrison Reed, who formally took editorship of the Milwaukee Sentinel in 1838, published his newspaper on behalf of the maverick politician James D. Doty. When Doty was a Democrat, the Sentinel supported Democrats; when Doty threw his support to William Henry Harrison in the presidential campaign of 1840, the Sentinel

followed. As a result, Reed won the animosity of both Democrats and anti-Doty Whigs. During the election campaign for territorial delegate in 1841, a group of Democrats foreclosed a lien on the Sentinel and published the newspaper on behalf of their candidate until after the election. Reed was never thereafter able to win the confidence of his fellow Whigs, many of whom believed he had been in collusion with the Democrats, and he sold the Sentinel.[20] He then moved to Madison to publish the Wiskonsan Enquirer [sic] as Doty's principal journalistic voice. Doty, however, withdrew his support of his editor, and Reed temporarily left journalism.[21]

When Reed lost the Sentinel, Elisha Starr, bank-rolled by a consortium of Whigs, established the Milwaukee Journal to support the Whig candidate for delegate. He had the backing of the party and its leaders in Milwaukee during the campaign, but after the election their enthusiasm for the newspaper waned, and within six months Starr had to shut down the Journal.[22]

From whatever quarter support came, it gave the press what George Hyer called "the stigma of a pensioned agency."[23] And it was not generous. Many a printer must have nodded in agreement when Josiah Noonan lamented in his Wisconsin Enquirer of December 5, 1840, that there was "but a poor prospect ahead for a man whose dependence for a livelihood is upon the patronage extended to a newspaper establishment." Still later, after he had moved to Milwaukee and was operating the Milwaukee Courier, Noonan complained again of the bleak outlook for printer-editors and characterized most printing establishments in the Territory as being "so poor that they are compelled to change hands with almost every moon. . . ." He laid the blame on "town speculators and politicians who furnish another printer with a stock of paper and fine stories and get him a going, and in the course of six months his credit entirely runs down, and he too fails."[24]

Once started, the printer-editors were expected to find other sources of income, and they looked first to attracting advertisers, setting rates which were

reasonable, if not generous. The Green Bay Wisconsin Democrat and the Madison Express, for example, charged $1 per square for the first insertion, 25 cents for subsequent insertions, and gave discounts by the year; others, such as the Racine Advocate and the Waukesha American Freeman were even more generous, charging a flat $6 per square for one year. But "there were but a few places of business and no interior settlements requiring printing of any kind," particularly in the 1830s, George Hyer recalled.[25] The frontier printer seldom had as much advertising as he wanted or needed. When a windfall of advertising did come to the print shop, the event was of such importance that printers cut editorial matter to make room. Noonan found himself in such a situation in mid-1840, and he explained to his Enquirer readers:

> In consequence of the unusual press of ads, this week, we are compelled to omit several articles which should have made their appearance in the present number. . . . They will all be published in the next Enquirer. In the mean time, our correspondents will exercise a little patience.[26]

That was a rare occasion, however.

Subscribers provided still another potential source of income. As already noted, the newspapers were circulated free in the East, but subscribers in Wisconsin were expected to pay. The Green Bay Advocate charged $1.50 a year in advance, or $2 later; the Wisconsin Argus and Madison Express were $2 in advance, $3 later; the Wisconsin Enquirer, $3 in advance, $3.50 in paid within six months, and $4 if paid at the end of the year. But subscribers were not easily found. A month after they had launched their Southport American at what is now Kenosha in 1841, editors J. B. Jilson and N. P. Dowst reported that they had expected their office would be

> filled with eager and clamorous subscribers. But alas for the soberness of reality! there is nothing but the ticking of the compositor's stick, the grumbling of the devil and the scolding of the pressmen, and we ourselves cooped up, in all honor, in our editorial corner, knocking and belaboring our brains for something to make an article of.

Jilson and Dowst urged their readers "cash in hand enter your names for subscriptions, and think yourselves happy for the chance."[27] But even when subscribers did enter their names, they were slow in paying, and the printer-editors had to plead for payment. Their pleadings took the form of humor on occasion, as when Noonan asked: "Did you ever see a drunken man who did not think he was sober? Did you ever see a printer who had two coats on his back?"[28] Charles C. Sholes turned to sarcasm when numerous appeals for payment failed:

> Supporting the Press.--Taking a newspaper three or four years, and when dunned for the money getting in a pet, refusing to pay, and then discontinuing the paper.[29]

Some chose a soft-sell, as did Jerome L. Marsh of the Platteville Independent American: "If you wish the printer a happy new year, you cannot better show it than by settling up."[30] William W. Wyman was more direct in calling on subscribers indebted to his Madison Express "for one year and upwards, to fork over immediately, or we shall be under the disagreeable necessity of putting their bills in the hands of proper persons for collection." Wyman explained that he could not "purchase paper and other materials, and have help without cash."[31] But while Wyman and the others preferred cash, they would also take produce in payment or, in winter months, firewood.[32] Their continued pleas, however, would indicate that subscribers did not "fork over immediately," but were nevertheless kept on the subscription lists.

Printers also sought to supplement their incomes with contracts for public printing, but they reported later that the work of setting line after line of public laws and executive proclamations in nonpareil or agate brought few, if any, profits. Beriah Brown, who established the Wisconsin Democrat at Madison in 1846, considered misinformed those who "had their envy excited by the rapid fortunes which it is supposed are made from the State printing contracts." Brown did public printing for nearly 10 years under both territorial and state administrations, and during that time, he said, he took from the business "not one dollar" in profit. H. A.

Tenney, editor of Madison's Wisconsin Argus from 1847 to 1852, and territorial printer early in 1843, echoed Brown in testifying to his own experiences: "I never made a dollar out of all the public printing I ever had -- that is, the profits of one year were so uniformly exhausted the next, that the aggregate result was a loss." The public printer who survived a decade without bankruptcy, Tenney believed, "must be regarded as a miracle of success, under the ordinary circumstances of the past." Some printers did gain from public printing, but not always honestly, it has been suggested, and given the poverty of most printer-editors, it is not surprising that they would be corrupted.[33]

Finally, the printer-editors also did job printing. But while they might offer, as did the Racine Argus, work "executed on short notice and at moderate prices in a style equal to any in the western country," there was little work to do: "no flaming handbills were issued, no shows traversed the country, no gift concerts, festivals, or excursions, called for a display of printer's ink."[34] It was not until the 1850s and 1860s, as business developed to provide an advertising base and more settlers arrived to provide increased readership, "that the business of publishing became self-relying and self-supporting," though even then printer-editors faced grave financial difficulties. Rufus King, editor and publisher of the Milwaukee Sentinel from 1845 to 1861, took up his duties believing "that the prospect ahead is as fair as I could reasonably expect or wish";[35] after all, seven years had elapsed since Noonan had first complained about the printer's prospects. But by 1857, King was writing bitterly to his friend Thurlow Weed, the Albany publisher and politican, of his "load of financial cares" and his inability to secure a "good businessman for a partner."[36] By the end of 1860 he was seeking "a year or two's relaxation from editorial cares & labors," while working at "some more lucrative occupation than of editing a newspaper."[37] (With the outbreak of the Civil War, King finally escaped the print shop; a West Point graduate, he won appointment as a brigadier general of volunteers in the

Union army and later was named Minister to Rome. He did not return to newspapering.)

The shops out of which the printer-editors operated gave evidence of their poverty, having an "appearance of primitiveness," as George Hyer described the Intelligencer office at Green Bay as he remembered seeing it. While eastern publishers were adopting power presses in the 1830s, the Wisconsin territorial printer-editor normally had only a single hand-operated, flat-bed press, frequently a Ramage, which was built of mahogany or other heavy wood and operated at great exertion, or the iron Washington flat-bed press; the power press did not make its appearance in Wisconsin until 1846.[38] The printer's type cases boasted only two or three fonts of type, worn down by his own use and perhaps by the use of someone before him. His supplies of paper, ink, and other materials were meager. Everything was "confined within very narrow quarters," as was, for example, the Milwaukee Advertiser office in 1836, "the entire establishment occupying less room than [just thirty years later] deemed necessary for an editor's sanctum."[39]

The presses were built in the East and arrived in Wisconsin, many of them, after passing from print shop to print shop along the way; rare was the printer-editor who could afford better than a second-hand press. John P. Sheldon, publisher of the Wisconsin Democrat at Madison in the 1840s, believed the Intelligencer's Ramage was the same one he had used when he began business as a printer at Detroit in 1817. It later saw service in a Madison printing office and, in 1841, was shipped back to Green Bay where Suydam used it to print his Phoenix. The press was destroyed by fire later that year; the Phoenix did not rise from the ashes, however.[40]

J. A. Hadley used a Ramage with a lengthy history when he began publication of his Watertown Chronicle in 1847. C. D. Robinson, editor of the Green Bay Advocate from 1846 to 1886, testified that he had seen the same press used in the 1830s "to disseminate anti-Jackson doctrines in Western New York. With variable fortunes,

it finally became the property of a Fourierite Society in Monroe county, in that State, and when that bubble exploded, Haldey brought it west."[41] Charles C. Sholes and his brother Henry bought a Washington press in 1835 to print the Wisconsin Free Press at Green Bay. They transported it to Southport, now Kenosha, when they established their Southport Telegraph in 1840. The Washington printed the Telegraph for about 15 years, then was sold to Edgar J. Farnum, proprietor of the Elkhorn Independent. It was said to have been in use there as late as 1865.[42]

Unreliable communications posed still another set of problems for the Wisconsin printer-editor: "the anxious uncertainties attending the arrival of paper and material, the irregularity of the mails, the difficulties attending the circulation of his weekly edition. . . ." Most of his supplies were transported from Buffalo through Lakes Erie, Huron, and Michigan, and then only from late spring to late fall, when the lakes were open for shipping. Most often shipments came by sailboat, although they were also carried on schooners, sailboats with auxiliary steam-engines, or later in the period, on steamboats. Travel time was about two weeks in good weather, but to the anxious publisher it seemed much longer, even months, between the time he placed his order and its arrival. Indeed, printer-editors "deemed themselves fortunate if supplies reached them before a 'suspension' of their labors had been the necessary result of delay," Hyer recalled. When materials did arrive, they were overjoyed: "Imagine the landing of that old press and its small assortment of types, cases, paper and inks on the wharfless shore at Green Bay. What a prospect for a publisher," Hyer said years later.[43]

Sometimes, however, equipment did not arrive at all. When Noonan ordered a press and equipment on which to print the Enquirer in the spring of 1838, he and Hyer, who was to be his journeyman and, later, his partner, expected it would arrive within two or three months. As summer lengthened into fall, the material

did not appear; then they learned that the press had been lost overboard when the boat bringing it from Buffalo was caught in a storm on Lake Huron.[44] (As noted above, however, Noonan was able to publish by buying the office of the Racine Argus.)

That press, had it survived the voyage, would have been put ashore at Green Bay, loaded on a barge for transport about 120 miles down the Fox River to Fort Winnebago (now Portage), and from there carried 35 miles by wagon to Madison. Other shipments bound for inland communities frequently made a circuitous eight-day river voyage from Pittsburgh via the Ohio, the Mississippi, and the Fever River to Galena, where they were put aboard stages for overland transport.[45]

Whatever the method of transport, whatever the route, there were delays, and the printer-editors not infrequently found it necessary to apologize to their readers for resulting publication delays. The Racine Argus did not appear as scheduled on April 7, 1838, because an expected supply of paper did not arrive. The editors assured their readers in the issue of April 14, however, that they had "procured a large quantity, sufficient for several months, and will always be able to issue the paper upon the regular day." The paper was not stacked in the printing office, however, but in Chicago, and it was six weeks before the newspaper again appeared. Readers learned later that the supply of paper had been shipped to Racine by sailboat "but could not be landed on account of the wind," and had to be returned to Chicago. Subsequently, deliverymen hired to transport the paper did not, for some reason, pick it up, and finally the printer had to go to Chicago to get it.[46] Other printer-editors, too, sometimes had to suspend publication while they waited for paper or, in some instances, had to cease publication altogether. Those who anticipated shortages reduced the size of their newspapers.[47]

Even when their orders did arrive on time, Wisconsin's printer-editors sometimes found their suppliers, whether out of negligence or design, had sent materials of poor quality or of the wrong specifications. Horace A. Tenney

of the Wisconsin Argus complained publicly that some eastern type founders "make a practice of selling an article to western printers which generally fails about the first year," and he vowed that he would never again buy type without a warranty.[48] A supply of paper once arrived at the Milwaukee Sentinel office which editor Harrison Reed described to his readers as "hardly fit for wrapping paper; and not only 'too short at the top,' like the Paddy's blanket, but short at the bottom also, and a 'scant pattern' for width into the bargain."[49] When a Buffalo, N. Y., supplier sent Charles D. Robinson a smaller size paper than usual, he told readers of his Green Bay Advocate: "This is a new feature in the history of newspapers. Those which prosper generally enlarge -- we are prospering beautifully and are ensmalled."[50]

Because of the difficulties of transportation, Tenney, Reed, Robinson, and their colleagues had little choice but to use whatever was sent them while waiting for new orders to be filled. It was not until 1848, when the first paper mill was established in Wisconsin[51] and 1856, when the first type foundry began operation,[52] that such problems were alleviated. In the meantime, the printer-editors seemed to accept the situation sanguinely.

Printer-editors of the time were less sanguine about the vagaries of mail delivery. None could "take out his watch, and calculate with certainty the arrival of a mail" that he might have looked for to bring him exchange newspapers from the East or South. It took two to three weeks for letters and newspapers to arrive in Milwaukee from New York "and their arrivals were events of no small importance," because the printer never knew when the mail would arrive and because its contents helped to fill the columns of his newspaper.[53]

At the same time, the printer could not count on the mails into the interior to carry his newspapers to subscribers with any regularity. The mail to Green Bay was carried on what were called "mud wagons," and when the weather was good they

made deliveries once a week, but only when the weather was good. Less regular deliveries were made to the military posts at Fort Howard, on the west bank of the Fox River across from Green Bay; to Fort Winnebago, at the portage between the Fox and the Wisconsin; and to Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien. Mails elsewhere into the interior of the Territory "jogged along slowly on the back of an Indian pony, the carrier being some half-breed, or frontier man, who was at home wherever the night overtook him, and his arrival or departure was governed by no fixed rule." Hyer recalled "frequently to have seen the mail bag laid aside at some settler's hut, or stowed away in an Indian wigwam, waiting for the pleasure of the carrier who was off on a drunken frolic."[54]

The difficulties with the mails sent the printer-editors to their cases in a rage. They complained time and again of "the constant failures and delays of the mail." To one editor, the situation was "a sore inconvenience"; to another, it was "beyond all endurance"; to still another, it was "too great an evil to be borne in silence," and enough "to vex a man blessed with only an ordinary degree of patience most sorely." The milder men said simply that "everything seems to be at loose ends" in the postal service or suggested that "The Postmaster at Chicago ought to be reformed." The more outraged wrote of what they saw as "gross and villainous mismanagement" in the department and the shortcomings, even criminality, of individual mail cariers. And in almost every instance they coupled their complaints with apologies "for the barren state of our columns" as a result of not receiving exchange newspapers or for delays subscribers experienced.[55]

The journeyman compositors and pressmen of the time -- jours, in the jargon of the day -- posed a wholly different set of problems. They were a "set of free and easy fellows," as Hyer described them on one occasion, or on another, "self-reliant, independent, and improvident."[56] An itinerant bunch, they traveled from place to place as the mood, too frequently created by alcohol, struck them. Too, not all worked all the time as printers but could be found in a variety of

occupations. George Hyer, like Albert Ellis, though trained as a printer, also was a surveyor and was lured back to the case during intervals between surveying expeditions.[57]

Hyer worked first at the Milwaukee Advertiser alongside a Mr. Delay, whom he described as "liberally educated -- a graduate of an European college." Delay had learned printing as a boy, then joined the army in order to find adventure. On his discharge from one enlistment he worked briefly at the Advertiser office only to rejoin the army. He later was killed during a battle with Indians in New Mexico. Another soldier-printer was Sergeant J. O. Reeves, who on his discharge in mid-winter of 1838 after service at Fort Winnebago, walked the 40 miles to Madison where he found work at the Express as both compositor and pressman.

Still another of Hyer's acquaintances in the print shop was Charles B. Watson, who edited newspapers at Richmond, Virginia and Natchez, Mississippi before heading north. Unfortunately, Hyer observed, "dissipation had brought him to the lowest condition in life, and, broken in health and mind, he had 'tramped' about the world, concluding his rambling by walking from Milwaukee to Madison, where he died. . . ."[58]

Publishers told stories aplenty of those and other journeymen when they gathered in later years at meetings of the Wisconsin Editorial Association (later, the Wisconsin Press Association): of the "dilapidated specimen of a 'tramping jour'" one editor met three times in three different states over a period of years; of another of whom his employer thought that "the 'white horse' in said pressman had something to do with his 'knock down' arguments"; of the jour who traveled about the country from state capital to state capital and to the national capital and once, in the dome of the capitol building at Washington, fell asleep and, on waking, immediately composed "Night in the Dome of the Capitol," a popular essay of the day.[59]

How many compositors and pressmen may have drifted in and out of Wisconsin during the territorial period is impossible to estimate; Hyer recounted simply

that they "were not numerous, and could not be called on at will."[60] Richards, for example, managed to lure two journeymen out to Milwaukee from New York in 1836 to help him print the Advertiser only after paying their passage and all their expenses. Even then "it was with the greatest difficulty that [they] . . . could be induced to continue their labor."[61] And, in fact, as the blustery Wisconsin winter came on, they left.[62] Richards, however, at least managed to print his newspaper each week; Ellis and Suydam at Green Bay were able to publish their Intelligencer only irregularly during its first two years because they had difficulties securing help. It was not until August 22, 1835, that they could announce with any confidence that they would thereafter be able to publish weekly because they had "at last procured the assistance of a good Journeyman printer." But their confidence was misplaced. Their journeyman soon deserted them, and in their issue of October 9, 1835, they lamented: "Journeyman printers are not as yet, productions of this country." In the 1840 census, the Wisconsin Democrat print shop reported two on the payroll; the two Milwaukee establishments, the Advertiser and the Sentinel, between them had seven; the Madison newspapers, the Wisconsin Express and the Wisconsin Enquirer, listed eleven; and the Miner's Free Press at Belmont boasted four.[63] But based on the testimony of their employers, those figures undoubtedly changed radically within a very short time.

In all, hardly a day went by when the printer-editors were not "short of compositors, short of paper, out of sorts and out of cash," Sam Ryan, editor of the Appleton Crescent, reminded his fellow editors in 1865. Nevertheless, they kept at their craft -- the "art preservative," they were fond of calling it. Even when they were "fagged out and driven to the wall," Ryan added, "it was a rare thing for one of them to give up in despair. Beaten at one point, they tried another. . . ."[64]

As we have seen, when Daniel H. Richards tired of the Advertiser, it was taken over by Josiah Noonan, who published it as the Courier until 1843

(both Richards and Noonan were exceptions to Ryan's rule; Richards did not publish another newspaper after his experience with the Advertiser, and Noonan left journalism when he sold the Courier). Noonan's first newspaper, the Wisconsin Enquirer, was published for a year by Charles C. Sholes, who had earlier established newspapers at both Green Bay and Kenosha and later published at Milwaukee, Waukesha, and again, Kenosha. Harrison Reed, after publishing the Milwaukee Sentinel and the Wiskonsan Enquirer, left newspapering in 1843, vowing never again to have anything to do with either politics or journalism, but in 1846 he established the Neenah Conservator, and two years later returned to Madison where he became associated with David Atwood and Horace Rublee in publication of the Wisconsin State Journal. George Hyer, who has been liberally quoted above, either worked for or published twelve newspapers in the southern part of Wisconsin during his 36-year-career, including five during the territorial period.[65]

Such men, and others, had numerous failures. But despite their problems, they also had successes. As noted above, the national census of 1840 counted only six newspapers in the Territory, and all were weeklies. By 1850, two years after statehood, there were six dailies, 35 weeklies, four bi-weekly or tri-weekly newspapers, and one monthly publication. And their combined circulation in that year was given as 2,600,000.[66]

The story of the westward expansion of journalism, then, is indeed a grand one, of Sentinels and Advertisers, Free Presses and Gazettes, Arguses and Aegises, appearing in almost every new community of the Territory. But it is all the more grand when seen in the context of the difficulties that had to be overcome in order to establish and maintain them; difficulties surmounted "by persistent labor, economy, and that spirit of confidence, and the inventive genius that seems to characterize the people of new countries," as George Hyer recalled in 1870;

> If material was not to be had, something was substituted; if workmen were wanting, less was attempted -- there was nothing urgent, no dailies

pressed the publishers, and the weeklies were more for foreign than for home consumption, and a day, sooner or later, in the issue, was a matter of little account; and so the first few years passed, ending volumes which to-day are of interest, as they tell of labor and progress. . . .[67]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism (3rd ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 282.

[2]William Howard Taft, "Local Newspapers and Local History," in Ronald T. Farrar and John D. Stevens (eds.), Mass Media and the National Experience (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) pp. 173-4.

[3]Daniel Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience, (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 124. Boorstin briefly discusses boosterism in the Wisconsin press, pp. 128-9.

[4]William H. Lyon, The Pioneer Editor in Missouri, 1808-1860 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), George S. Hage, Newspapers on the Minnesota Frontier, 1849-1860 (Minneapolis, Minnesota Historical Society, 1967). See also William A. Katz,"The Western Printer and His Publications, 1850-90," Journalism Quarterly, 44:4 (Winter, 1967), 708-14.

[5]U.S. Department of State, Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States as Obtained at the Department of State, From the Returns of the Sixth Census, by Counties and Principal Towns (Washington: Thomas Allen, 1841), p. 355.

[6]Bill of sale, Oct. 12, 1838, Noonan Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

[7]Bill of sale, March 18, 1841, Noonan Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

[8](Madison) Wiskonsan Enquirer, July 28, 1842.

[9]U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1929), p. 123.

[10]Wisconsin Editorial Association, Proceedings, Ninth Session, (Madison: Atwood & Rublee, 1865), p. 73; Twelfth Session (Madison: Atwood & Culver, 1869), p. 107. (The Proceedings will hereafter be referred to as PWEA.) For a detailed account of boosterism in the Wisconsin press see Jacqueline Ann Fix, "The Establishment of Wisconsin's Territorial Newspapers, 1833-1848," unpublished M. S. thesis (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1961) pp. 63-78.

[11]PWEA, First, Second, and Third Sessions (Madison: Carpenter & Hyer, 1859), p. 21.

[12]Ibid., Twelfth Session, p. 106.

[13]Ibid., First, Second, and Third Sessions p. 21. Cf., Thirty-Third Session (Lake Geneva: James E. Heg, 1887), p.17.

[14]Ibid., Twelfth Session, p. 106; Thirteenth Session (Madison: Atwood & Culver, 1870), p. 55. Milwaukee Advertiser, July 14, 1836.

[15]PWEA, Thirteenth Session, p. 56. Milwaukee Sentinel, June 27, 1837.

[16]The History of Racine and Kenosha Counties (Chicago: Western Historical Co, 1879, p. 446. Racine Argus, March 10, 1838; June 16, 1838.

[17]Wisconsin Enquirer, Nov. 2, 1839.

[18]PWEA, Twelfth Session, p. 107. Cf., Ninth Session, p. 73.

[19]Ibid., Twelfth Session, p. 107.

[20]See especially, Milwaukie Sentinel [sic], June 15, 1841; Aug. 3, 1841; Oct. 23, 1841. Southport American, Oct. 14, 1841; Milwaukee Sentinel, May 26, 1899.

[21]PWEA, First, Second, and Third Sessions, p. 28.

[22]Milwaukee Journal, Aug. 27, 1841; Feb. 16, 1842.

[23]PWEA, Seventh and Eighth Sessions (Madison: Atwood & Rublee, 1865), p. 30.

[24]Milwaukee Courier, Oct. 20, 1841.

[25]PWEA, Ninth Session, p. 73.

[26]Wisconsin Enquirer, June 17, 1840.

[27]Southport American, Oct. 28, 1841.

[28]Milwaukee Courier, June 26, 1844.

[29](Green Bay) Wisconsin Democrat, April 16, 1839.

[30](Platteville) Independent American and General Advertiser, Jan. 8, 1847.

[31]Madison Express, June 18, 1846.

[32]Milwaukee Courier, Dec. 29, 1841. Cf. Milwaukee Journal, Feb. 16, 1842.

[33]PWEA, First, Second, and Third Sessions, pp. 32, 69. For discussion of public printing activities see Karl Trever, "Wisconsin Newspapers as Publishers of the Federal Laws, 1836-1874," Wisconsin Magazine of History, 31:309 (March, 1948). See also Alex Nagy, "Public Printing in Wisconsin Territory," unpublished M. A. thesis (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1970).

[34]Racine Argus, April 14, 1838. PWEA, Fourteenth Session p. 67.

[35]PWEA, Twelfth Session,p. 107. Rufus King to Thurlow Weed, Nov. 21, 1845, Thurlow Weed Collection, University of Rochester Library.

[36]King to Weed, Feb. 16, 1857, loc. cit.

[37]King to William Henry Seward, Nov. 18, 1860, W. H. Seward Collection, University of Rochester Library.

[38]Milwaukee Sentinel, Oct. 20, 1846.

[39]PWEA, Twelfth Session, p. 54; Ninth Session, p. 72.

[40]Ibid., First, Second, and Third Sessions, p. 21; Ninth Session, p. 15.

[41]Ibid., First, Second,and Third Sessions, p. 124-5.

[42]Ibid., Ninth Session, p. 15.

[43]I. W. Warner, The Immigrant's Guide and Citizen's Manual (New York; C. M. Sexton, 1848), p. 163. Samuel Freeman, The Emigrants' Hand Book and Guide to Wisconsin (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Sentinel and Gazette, 1851), pp. 89-90. PWEA, Eleventh Session, (Madison: Atwood & Rublee, 1868), pp. 105-7.

[44]PWEA, Fourteenth Session (Madison: Atwood & Culver, 1871),pp. 68-9.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Racine Argus, Apr. 14, 1838; June 2, 1838.

[47]Milwaukee Sentinel, June 1, 1838; April 27, 1847; May 15, 1847; May 18, 1847; Milwaukee Courier, Sept. 8, 1841.

[48](Madison) Wisconsin Argus, May 22, 1849.

[49]Milwaukee Sentinel, May 14, 1839.

[50]Green Bay Advocate, Jan. 7, 1847.

[51]Milwaukee Sentinel, March 8, 1848; March 15, 1848.

[52]PWEA, First, Second, and Third Sessions, p. 82. Milwaukee City Directory for 1857 and 1858 (Milwaukee: King, Jermain & Co., [1857]), pp. 10, 67.

[53]PWEA, Tenth Session, (Madison: Atwood & Rublee, 1866), pp. 64-5; Ninth Session, p. 75.

[54]PWEA, Ninth Session, p. 75; Tenth Session, p. 64.

[55]Milwaukee Sentinel, April 10, 1838; Oct. 6, 1845; Oct. 25, 1845; Aug. 10, 1847. Milwaukee Courier, Dec. 8, 1841; Dec. 29, 1841. Wisconsin Enquirer, April 28, 1841. (Green Bay) Wisconsin Democrat, Dec. 30, 1837.

[56]PWEA, Ninth Session, p. 73; Eleventh Session, p. 107.

[57]Ibid., Fourteenth Session, p. 66; Ninth Session, p.72.

[58]Ibid., Eleventh Session, p. 107.

[59]Ibid., Fourth, Fifth,and Sixth Sessions (Madison: Carpenter & Hyer, 1863), pp. 111-12; First, Second, and Third Sessions, p. 61.

[60]Ibid., Eleventh Session, p. 107.

[61]Ibid., First, Second, and Third Sessions, p. 20.

[62]Ibid., Fourteenth Session,p. 66.

[63]Compendium of . . . the Sixth Census, p. 355.

[64]PWEA, Ninth Session, pp. 72-3.

[65]Careers of Wisconsin printer-editors can be traced through Donald E. Oehlerts (comp.), Guide to Wisconsin Newspapers, 1833-1957 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1958) and Albert H. Allen, "Biographical Index" to Douglas C. McMurtrie, Early Printing in Wisconsin (Seattle: F. McCaffrey, 1931), pp. 103-41 and PWEA, passim.

[66]J. D. B. DeBow, Superintendent of the U. S. Census, Statistical View of the United States . . . Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census (Washington: Beverley Tucker, 1854), p. 156. DeBow cautions the reader that the statistics "fell short of, rather than exceeded, reality." p. 1541.

[67]PWEA, Fourteenth Session, pp. 65-6.